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The True Story of the Invention of Wilson's Common Sense Ear Drums Told by Geo. H. Wilson, the Inventor.

I was deaf from infancy. Eminent doctors, surgeons and ear specialists treated me at great expense and yet did me no good. I tried all the artificial appliances that claimed to restore hearing, but they failed to benefit me in the least. I even went to the best specialists in the world, but their efforts were unavailing.

My case was pronounced incurable!

I grew desperate; my deafness tormented me. Daily I was becoming more of a recluse avoiding the companionship of people because of the annoyance my deafness and sensitiveness caused me. Finally I began to experiment on myself, and after patient years of study, labor, and personal expense, I perfected something that I found took the place of the natural ear drums, and I called it Wilson's Common Sense Ear Drum, which I now wear day and night with perfect comfort, and do not even have to remove them when washing. No one can tell I am wearing them, as they do not show, and as they give no discomfort whatever, I scarcely know it myself.

With these drums I can now hear a whisper. I join in the general conversation and hear everything going on around me. I can hear a sermon or lecture from any part of a large church or hall. My general health is improved because of the great change my Ear Drums have made in my life. My spirits are bright and cheerful. I am a cured, changed man.

Since my fortunate discovery it is no longer necessary for any deaf person to carry a trumpet, a tube, or any other such old-fashioned makeshift. My Common Sense Ear Drum is built on the strictest scientific principles, contains no metal, wires, or strings of any kind, and is entirely new and up to date in all respects. It is so small that no one can see it when in position, yet it collects all the sound waves and focuses them against the drum head, causing you to hear naturally and perfectly. It will do this even when the natural ear drums are partially or entirely destroyed, perforated, scarred, relaxed, or thickened. It fits any ear from childhood to old age, male or female, and aside from the fact that it does not show, it never causes the least irritation, and can be used with comfort day and night without removal for any cause.

With my device I can cure deafness in any person, no matter how acquired, whether from catarrh, scarlet fever, typhoid or brain fever, measles, whooping cough, gatherings in the ear, shock from artillery, or through accidents. My invention not only cures, but at once stops the progress of deafness, and all roaring and buzzing noises. The greatest aurist surgeons in the world recommend it as well as physicians of all schools. It will do for you what no medicine or medical skill on earth can do.

I want to place my language book on deafness in the hands of every deaf person in the world. I will gladly send it free to anyone whose name and address I can get. It describes and illustrates Wilson's Common Sense Ear Drums and contains hundreds of letters from numerous users in the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, India, and the remotest islands. I have letters from people in every station of life—ministers, physicians, lawyers, merchants, society ladies, etc., and tell the truth about the benefits to be derived from my wonderful little device. You will find the names of people in your own town and state, many whose names you know, and I am sure that all this will convince you that the cure of deafness has at last been solved by my invention.

Don't delay; write for the free book today and address my firm—The Wilson Ear Drum Co., 1748 Todd Building, Louisville, Ky., U. S. A.

English by such a combination as "tschschtsch!" Do you blame the Russian for saying that the laugh is on us for being compelled to resort to such a "barbarous" combination of letters to express two simple sounds?

Another difficulty that American newspaper readers encounter is in the different forms of spelling one and the same name. The Muscovite will smilingly assure you that that is the fault of the English, and not of the Russian. He will insist that English is defective in not having more letters, instead of being compelled to resort to such makeshifts as "ch," "sh," "th" and "tch" to represent simple sounds. Also, he will argue, there is great confusion in English because some sounds are represented by two or more combinations of letters. In selecting the English letters to represent Russian sounds each translator is a law unto himself, and the untrained ears of translators add still further to the confusion.

*

"Tsarevitch" is a simple word in Russian, and this spelling represents its sound well to the understanding of an English speaker. In Russian the word begins with a letter which is translated by "ts," because it has the sound of "ts" in such words as wits, sits, fits and hits. It ends with the Russian letter that sounds like "tch" in witch. Yet we find these variations:

Tsarevitch	Tzarevitch	Czarevitch
Tsarevich	Tzarevich	Czarevich
Tsarevitz	Tzarevitz	Czarevitz
Tsarewitz	Tzarewitz	Czarewitz
Cesarevitch		Cezarevitch
Cesarevich		Cezarevich
Cesarevitz		Cezarevitz
Cesarewitz		Cezarewitz

Occasionally the I in the last syllable is displaced by "ee." This makes an entirely new series of sixteen spellings possible. Occasionally the German combination of "tsch" is used for the final sound in the word, making another possible series of spelling. It should be explained that W in some Slavic tongues has the sound of English V but it is not in the Russian alphabet.

Some of the Russian vowels have no exact equivalents in English, and the translator must make a choice of expedients. There is further confusion because untrained ears do not catch the Russian sound exactly, or do not grasp the proper values of the English letters. Admiral Alexieff's name is rendered into English as Alexeff, Alexiff, Alexeieff, Alexyeff and Alexeeff, to say nothing about the consonantal variations.

*

The question has been asked: "How should one pronounce the Russian names found in American newspapers?" The only possible rule is to do the best you can. Sometimes you will be right, because you cannot well go astray on the English rendering. Often you will be wrong, because the English rendering is bound to lead you astray.

There are three semi-vowels in Russian that are certain to trip up any foreigner who tries to cultivate their acquaintance. If you will pronounce the word "foil" and then try to detect the sound of the I you will get some idea of the elusiveness of one of those semi-vowels. The word "foil" is well-chosen. This Russian letter is used only after vowels, and we have an illustration of it in the name of Tolstoi or Tolstoy. There is a corresponding semi-vowel for use after consonants, but it is much nearer the vanishing point, so near that there is nothing in English to remotely represent it. It is almost as hard for the untrained ear to detect the sound as it is for the eye to see the breath.

The third semi-vowel has no sound of its own in modern Russian, but after certain weak consonants it changes the sound into that of the corresponding strong letters. Thus, B is sounded as P, V as F, G as K, D as T, and K as S. You may write "Kishinev" if you wish to follow the Russian letters, or "Kishineff" if you wish to make the sound clear to the understanding of the English reader. Thus the "Aleksandrov" of Russian may be translated as "Alexandroff," although in Russian the letter X does not have the sound of "ks." The effect of this semi-vowel on the other consonants is to harden those consonants. At least the Russians say so, and I will take their word for it, for the difference in sound is too subtle a mystery for my ear to discover it.

Yet on the whole the Russian consonants are easy of pronunciation when attacked separately. In some of their combinations they may well terrify an English speaker. For example: *Gde* (where), *kto* (who), *chto* (what), *vdova* (widow), *mne* (me), *nyanya* (nurse-maid), *vsyu* (all). The bearded Cossack may be as fierce as he seems, but a little courage is sufficient to conquer these savage-looking consonantal cohorts.

*

But of Russian vowels beware. They will try the metal of the most valiant assaulter. If you would get some understanding of the niceties and difficulties of vowel sounds, just experiment with almost any foreign tongue. Have a Frenchman, for instance, pronounce such a common word as *merci* (thanks), repeating it twenty times while you try to imitate him. You will probably be ready to vow that you have caught the sound at least ten times, and you will probably be indignant when the Frenchman continues to shake his head smilingly even to the twentieth time. Of course you may turn the tables by asking the Frenchman to pronounce some simple English word, and incidentally you will get a good lesson in the subtleties of spoken sounds. It will also show you that the ear and the vocal organs have to be trained to their work by long effort, although you may not be conscious of that in using your native tongue.

Before you score the Russian sounds listen to a Russian: "Oh English is such a crazy, lawless language! When I hear the word 'captain' I am puzzled how to write the last syllable. Shall it be 'tin,' 'tun,' 'ton,' 'ten,' or 'tan'?" Can you blame him? Many of the variations in the English spelling of Russian words is due to the fact that different ears interpret the vowel sounds differently. Thus "Kishineff" is often translated "Kisheneff," although in Russian one and the same letter is used for the first two vowel sounds.

As to the terrifying combinations of consonants, it might take some of the conceit out of us to let a Hawaiian testify. He has difficulty in sounding more than one consonant in a syllable, and transforms such a simple word as "cab" into "*cabu*." He is right at home on words like *kooiaiosi* (to testify), but what do you suppose his opinion is of the English word "strength," not to mention "strength'n'd"?

An American, after a long residence in Constantinople, wrote:

"There is only one word in all my letters which I am certain of not having spelt wrong, and that is the word *bactshtasch*, which signifies a present. I have heard it so often, and my ear is so accustomed to the tongue and my tongue to the pronunciation, that I am now certain I am not wrong to the hundredth part of a whisper or a lisp. There is no other word in the Turkish so well impressed on my mind, and so well remembered. Whatever else I have written, *Bactshtasch!* my earliest acquaintance in the Turkish language, I shall never forget you."

The American was really referring to our old friend "bakshish," but his ears played queer pranks.

*

When it comes to Russian grammar, I shall offer neither defense nor apology. The wits and critics may assail it to their hearts' content, and I shall sympathize with them. The grammarians agree that the Russian is "rich" in grammatical forms. Whenever a grammarian gloats over that particular kind of "richness" you may count on trouble for the rest of the human race. It is the mission of a grammarian to discover every possible difficulty in a language in order to play the rôle of guide, philosopher and friend—for a consideration. It is a case of bread and butter. The greater the obstacles the more necessary his services.

If he can't find difficulties he often invents them. With the possible exception of the pronouns in the third person singular, there is no such thing as gender in the English language, but the grammarians have the audacity to stick to the old fiction. At the very most English nouns have no more than three cases (some authorities limit the number to two and others to one case); but the grammarians vary from three to six. It may take several generations of men to overcome these fetiches of grammar; but the subjunctive mood, that sweet morsel for the grammarians, has almost been kicked out of the English language. It has already been banished from the speech of the masses, and even among the writers it is not seen often except in the verb "to be," in such expressions as "If he were here" and "If it be possible."

To do full justice to the Russian noun would require fifteen declensions. As there are six cases in the singular and plural, that means a hundred and eighty inflections, not to mention six irregular forms added for good measure. The Russians say that it is not fair to add thirty more inflections for the vocative case because they are like the nominative,

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